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14. (Amended) The touch-operating input device according to claim 12, wherein each of the plural sub-faces is set to be different in height from the neighboring sub-faces.

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20. (Amended) ~~A touch-operation assisting method for a touch-operating input device~~ comprising a display device for displaying operation function items and a touch panel which is provided separately from said display device and which is for selecting the function items by touch operation, wherein a touch-operation guide shape is provided on a touch-operation face of said touch panel, wherein an image representing the touch-operation face is displayed on said display device, ~~the image being overlapped with the operation function items.~~

Please add the following claim:

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21. (New) A touch-operating input device comprising a display device for displaying operation function items and a touch panel which is provided separately from the display device and which is for selecting the function items by touch operation, wherein a touch-operation guide shape is formed on the touch-operation face of said touch panel, said touch-operating guide shape is at least one of a convex shape and a concave shape, wherein at least one of the convex shape and the concave shape is disposed at a center portion serving as a reference for determining a position on the touch-operation face.

REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended by incorporating the limitations of Claim 15. Claims 3, 7, 12, and 20 have been rewritten in independent form by incorporating all of the limitations of base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 9-14 have been amended to correct informalities. Claim 21 has been added. Support for Claim 21 can be found in original Claims 1, 2, and 10 and page 3, line 19 through page 4, line 4 of the specification, for example. As such, no new matter has been added. Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE." Applicant respectfully requests entry of the amendments and reconsideration of the application in view of the amendments and the following remarks.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 9-15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112 because the term "touch-operation input device" does not have sufficient antecedent basis. The term has been changed to --touch-operating input device-- as the Examiner points out, thereby obviating this rejection.

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Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 2, 8-11, and 15-20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Yoshimasa. Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. Claim 1 has been amended to expedite the prosecution by incorporating the limitations of Claim 15, and Claim 15 has been canceled without prejudice. Claims 2, 8-11, and 16-18 are dependent ultimately on Claim 1. Claim 20 has been rewritten in independent form by incorporating the limitations of Claim 19 which has been canceled accordingly.

As the Examiner points out, Yoshimasa teaches features similar to those recited in the above claims. However, although the Examiner asserts that Yoshimasa teaches Claim 15, the Examiner does not fully articulate the recitations of Claim 15. Yoshimasa does not teach that an image of the protruding brackets is displayed on a monitor, or operation function items are superposed on the image. Yoshimasa's device simply shows items and Yoshimasa makes no mention of an image of the protruding brackets or operation function items the superposed on the image. These distinct features are important to easy and accurate operation without actually looking at the input device. Thus, Claims 1 and 20 as amended could not be anticipated by Yoshimasa. The remaining claims are dependent ultimately on Claim 1 and also could not be anticipated by Yoshimasa. Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of this rejection.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 3-7 and 12-14 have been objected to but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form by incorporating all of the limitations of base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 3, 7, and 12 have been so amended, and the remaining claims are depending on either one of Claims 3, 7, or 12. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 3-7 and 12-14 are in condition for allowance.

New Claim

Claim 21 has been added. Claim 21 includes the limitations of Claims 1, 2, and 10 with further clarifications. Claim 10 recites embodiments indicated in Figures 12-22, for example. The "center portion" is indicated by numeral 80 in the figures. This feature is in no way taught by Yoshimasa. The teachings of Yoshimasa could not lead to this feature. It is respectfully submitted that Claim 21 is allowable.

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CONCLUSION

In light of the Applicant's amendments to the claims and the foregoing Remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any remaining concerns which might prevent the prompt allowance of the application, the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number appearing below.

Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

Respectfully submitted,

KNOBBE, MARTENS, OLSON & BEAR, LLP

Dated: December 6, 2002

By:



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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 15 and 19 have been canceled.

Claim 1, 3, 7, 9-14, and 20 have been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A touch-operating input device comprising a display device for displaying operation function items and a touch panel which is provided separately from the display device and which is for selecting the function items by touch operation, wherein a touch-operation guide shape is formed on the touch-operation face of said touch panel, said touch-operating device further comprising control means for controlling said display device to display an image representing the touch-operation guide shape, the image being overlapped with the operation function items.

3. (Amended) ~~The~~A touch-operating input device ~~according to claim 2~~comprising a display device for displaying operation function items and a touch panel which is provided separately from the display device and which is for selecting the function items by touch operation, wherein a touch-operation guide shape is formed on the touch-operation face of said touch panel, said touch-operating guide shape is at least one of a convex shape and a concave shape, wherein at least one of the convex shape and the concave shape is designed to continuously extend in a predetermined direction on the touch-operation face of said touch panel.

7. (Amended) ~~The~~A touch-operating input device ~~according to claim 1~~comprising a display device for displaying operation function items and a touch panel which is provided separately from the display device and which is for selecting the function items by touch operation, wherein a touch-operation guide shape is formed on the touch-operation face of said touch panel, wherein plural continuously extending shapes extend from one end side to another end side on the touch-operation face.

9. (Amended) ~~The touch-operation~~operating input device according to claim 8, wherein plural pairs of the at least one of the convex shape and the concave shape arranged in the predetermined direction are arranged in a direction intersecting the predetermined direction.

10. (Amended) ~~The touch-operation~~operating input device according to claim 2, wherein at least one of the convex shape and the concave shape is disposed at at least one position serving as a reference for determining a position on the touch-operation face.

11. (Amended) The touch-operation~~operation~~operating input device according to claim 2, wherein the ~~concave~~convex shape is protruding shape and the concave shape is a recessed shape.

12. (Amended) ~~The~~A touch-operation~~operation~~operating input device ~~according to claim 1~~comprising a display device for displaying operation function items and a touch panel which is provided separately from the display device and which is for selecting the function items by touch operation, wherein a touch-operation guide shape is formed on the touch-operation face of said touch panel, wherein the touch-operation guide shape is designed by dividing the touch-operation face into plural sub-faces so that the respective sub-faces are shaped to be discontinuous at boundary positions between neighboring sub-faces.

13. (Amended) The touch-operation~~operation~~operating input device according to claim 12, wherein each of the plural sub-faces is slanted at a different angle from the neighboring sub-faces.

14. (Amended) The touch-operation~~operation~~operating input device according to claim 12, wherein each of the plural sub-faces is set to be different in height from the neighboring sub-faces.

20. (Amended) ~~The~~A touch-operation assisting method ~~according to claim 19~~for a touch-operating input device comprising a display device for displaying operation function items and a touch panel which is provided separately from said display device and which is for selecting the function items by touch operation, wherein a touch-operation guide shape is provided on a touch-operation face of said touch panel, wherein an image representing the touch-operation face is displayed on said display device, the image being overlapped with the operation function items.

Claim 21 has been added.